



MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING
Held Wednesday, March 22, 2000
on the City's lawsuit against USDA

The meeting began at 8:05 p.m. It was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Rodney M. Roberts,, Thomas X. White and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

ALSO PRESENT were Michael McLaughlin, City Manager and Robert Manzi, City Solicitor; Larry Liebesman and Rafe Peterson of Linowes and Blocher; Kevin Kelly of Environmental Systems Analysis; and John Christman of Greenhorne & O'Mara.

Mayor Davis convened the meeting. She noted it was for the purpose of providing information about the City's lawsuit against the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Mr. Liebesman, the City's attorney for the suit, presented a summary of the City's suit. He noted the City's suit alleges that the permitting process for the USDA office building was fast tracked and improperly segmented, so that the cumulative impact to sensitive wetlands in the vicinity of Sunnyside Avenue would not be identified.

Mr. Christman, the City's Traffic Consultant, presented his traffic analysis. The analysis showed that the storage lanes that are needed for the existing traffic and the traffic that would be generated by the USDA office building support adding two lanes in both directions on Sunnyside Avenue. It also showed that the volume of lefthand turning vehicles from northbound Edmonston Avenue onto Sunnyside Avenue would justify a double left turn onto Sunnyside. Neither of these impacts were addressed in the studies done for the office building.

Mr. Kelly, the City's Environmental Consultant, presented the environmental analysis. He noted the area on both sides of Sunnyside between Edmonston and the railroad tracks is a significant wetlands area that extends on both sides of Sunnyside. Known as Beltsville Bottomland Forest, this area consists of over 260 contiguous forested acres of habitat, some of which are Wetlands of Critical State Concern. The potential cumulative impacts from the USDA project would significantly disrupt this habitat. He also noted that the area of mitigation that was set aside for the office project was not even in the same watershed, so it was of no benefit to the area.

There were questions about downstream impacts, relation to a proposed development south of this area (Metroland) and impacts to other areas if road improvements occur.

Mayor Davis and Mr. Liebesman summarized the presentations of the meeting and the City's call for a full Environmental Impact Statement of the USDA proposal. Everyone was thanked for attending.

The meeting ended at 9:05 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael McLaughlin,

City Manager